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# THE PEACE TERMS OF THE ALLIES

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## THE PEACE TERMS OF THE ALLIES

THE last few days of 1916 and the first of 1917 will always be memorable in the history of the war, not for that which happened on the battlefield, but for the singular diplomatic interlude which took place. It is too soon to give a full account of it; no formal answer has been sent by Germany to President Wilson's Note, and even as I write there comes a new letter from the German Emperor, perhaps the strangest, as it is the most characteristic, utterance of any ruler that history records. But if the full narrative and comment on all that has occurred cannot be given yet, we have at least one memorable document: that in which the Allies have officially declared the objects with which they propose to continue the war. A momentous statement, and one that we hope will in future ages be looked upon as the dawn of a new and better period in the troubled annals of Europe. What is it, this explanation by the Allies that was refused to the Germanic Powers but gladly made to the President of the Republic of the United States? By the enemy, still parading a confidence which he can scarcely feel in the continuance of his military

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successes, it is described as an act of madness. To others it will seem a supreme act of faith—faith which gives courage at the present in the confident anticipation of a better time to come.

If there is one thing that men are agreed on, it is that this war must not cease in such a way as to leave a certain prospect of similar wars in the future.

The history of Europe has known in the past many occasions when a great war has found its close in a peace which, being based on no sound principles of law or policy, has laid up a store of future struggles. How easy would it be for the faint-hearted now to welcome this or any other conclusion! To do so would be to give up everything for which the struggle has been begun, and, in particular, it would definitely destroy the hope of the establishment of such a rule of peace in the future as the President has adumbrated. For how can there be peace in the future? The experiences of a century of history show that it will be impossible except on the basis of the division of the soil of Europe between equal and free nationalities, and, arising from this, the final abolition of all those cases in which an autocratic State rules over subjects who see in the authority to which they are subjected a fatal barrier between themselves and the attainment of those hopes which have been acquired by happier nations. That which has produced unrest on the soil of Europe has been the struggle, first by one, then by another nation, by Germans and Italians and Magyars and Poles, to attain that final political form which is enjoyed in Great

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Britain, in the United States of America, in France, in Spain, and in Scandinavia. Any settlement which does not attain this will be a partial and temporary one. Does anyone believe that if, as a result of this war, the Polish nation remained divided and subjected, the Czechs subject to the authority of an alien rule, the South Slavs and the Roumanians divided between one State enjoying a precarious independence, and another, the enemy of their race and their language, Italy with her natural frontiers still subject to the Austrian rule, which has engendered so many generations of just hatred—that the aspirations and hopes of these races would not at once spring up again? The edifice would be unstable, for the foundations would be unsound, and we could only look forward to a fresh era of revolution and sedition and war.

But let us assume that the aims of the Allies, as now put forward, were attained. Let us assume that there were separated from the German Empire those small frontier districts, the inhabitants of which are not German and have steadily refused to become German; if the Kingdom of Italy were at last extended to the summit of those mountains which form the natural frontier between the north and the south, between the great Plain of Central Europe and the Valley of the Mediterranean; if there was welcomed into the family of nations once more a Polish Commonwealth; if the crown of St. Wenceslas was once again worn by a successor to those rulers who in the long distant days played so great a part in the affairs of Europe; if the triple crown of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia were once more

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placed upon the head of a ruler in full sympathy with his subjects—then, for the first time, we could believe that peace could settle upon the troubled soil of Europe.

What has been the cause of wars in the past? Has it not been the constant struggle for territory between ambitious monarchs and the constant struggle for self-government by subjected nationalities? When once the soil of Europe has been divided so that there are no longer nationalities oppressed, either in whole or in part, then the picture will have been completed; then, for the first time, it will be possible for every State in Europe to guarantee to all the others its possessions, and wars for European territory will, in the nature of things, cease, for the causes of them will have disappeared.

It is for this reason that the war aims of the Allies, far-reaching though they may be, are in their essential nature infinitely more pacific than would be a return to the conditions before the war. It will be noted, and noted with satisfaction, that the Allies explicitly repudiate the conception that they wish to destroy the German peoples, whether in the Empire or in Austria-Hungary, or to interfere with their political position. It will be noted with satisfaction that there is no suggestion of any interference with the internal government of Germany. These terms, if accepted, would not interfere in any one matter with the complete independence, self-government, prosperity, content, commercial development, of any German town or district; Germany would remain as it is now, a united national

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State, free among other European States. What it does exclude is a system by which Germans should rule over other less favoured nations. Is it not this which has called forth a cry of rage from Germany when the text of the Note became known?

The German Powers have claimed that they, too, will be the protectors of the small and weak nations. It is open to them now to tell the world the programme by which they will carry this out. They complain that their offer of peace discussions has been coldly rejected. They say that an injustice has been done to them. It is easy for them to remove it. Let them imitate the Allies; let them, too, publish their aims. Are they willing to accept the principle that annexation and conquest of one nation by another are for all time to be banished from the continent of Europe; that the government of one people by another is to cease; that the injustice of the past is to be repaired? Are they willing to grant to Poles and Czechs and Roumanians those rights that they themselves value so highly? Are they willing that all Italian lands should be united under the crown of a national kingdom, as they claim that all Germans should be under their hereditary dynasties?

They are indignant that the Allies should speak of reparation and guarantees. But the united experience of civilised man has seen that crime can only be wiped out by reparation. They deny that a crime has been committed. Do they deny that the Armenian nation has been half-extinguished with every ingenuity of cruelty? And what of Belgium? They state that "the accusations about

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German warfare in Belgium and about the measures taken there in the interest of military safety have been repeatedly refuted by the Imperial Government as untrue." I would that this were so. If there has been a refutation, I have been unable to find it. I have read, indeed, one voluminous official work which purports to give such a refutation, but in it I found a confession and description of the wanton murder of civilians, which, on the evidence of those who took part in it, fully confirms the very charges brought against them.

But let us put this aside. What is the situation? Charges of a grave nature have been made by hundreds of witnesses, many of them disinterested, against the action of the German troops. These cannot be allowed to rest. They are true or false. Their truth must be determined or rebutted by the only method in which such charges can be refuted—by a public inquiry before a constituted court. More than this the Allies need not demand; less than this the Germans cannot possibly grant. Till they do so, however great their military successes are, the stain will be there. Of this they do not seem aware. I should have thought that for the defence of their own honour they would welcome the investigation, and if they are indeed as innocent as they assert, that they would freely agree to the punishment of those, if any, against whom the charges are proved. Do they do so? They are singularly averse to inquiry and the opinion of an open court. Charges were made against Serbia; an inquiry was offered, they refused it. Charges are made against themselves a thousand times worse than those made against the

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Serbeans; will they on this, too, refuse to assent to an inquiry, to a verdict and to judgment? But on this depends the future of Europe. It profits very little to talk of leagues to enforce peace or to limit the operations of war. Such a league there was; it included every civilised State. Its decrees have been disregarded, its conclusions derided. What use is it to found more such leagues? What the Allies demand is the enforcement of the decisions already in existence.

What use would it be to establish new weak and struggling States if this is not done? What use is it to compile treaties on international law? The new States will be overrun as the old were by the strongest neighbouring monarchy; the law will be openly disregarded by anyone who is strong enough to do so with impunity. Laws are useless unless they are enforced. It is the duty and it is the intention of the Allies to continue the work which they have undertaken until the existing law is enforced, and until the injury done to the existing States has been repaired. When this has once been done, then indeed we shall in the future be able to look with a new confidence on fresh laws that may be made, and the new States that are created will be able to enjoy their liberty in peace. Let the Germanic Powers accept this principle; then, but not till then, will there be hope that the war will cease. I will confess that I see in all their protestations and explanations, in their proclamations and their Notes and their speeches, not the vestige of a suggestion that the real truth of the situation has penetrated to their minds.

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But let the reader judge for himself. Here he has before him the text of the Notes, in which the Allies and the Belgian Government have presented their answer to the suggestions made by the President of the United States, and side by side with them they can read the last statement and apology made by Germany, also in the form of a Note to the Neutral Powers. To the latter there have been added comments where it seemed necessary to point out misrepresentations of facts.

## THE REPLY OF THE ALLIES TO THE AMERICAN NOTE.

1. The Allied Governments have received the Note handed to them on the 19th December, 1916, by the Government of the United States. They have considered it with the care due both to their own keen sense of the gravity of the present time, and to the sincere friendship which unites them to the American people.

2. In a general way, they desire to declare their respect for the lofty sentiments inspiring the American Note and their whole-hearted agreement with the proposal to create a league of nations which shall assure peace and justice throughout the world. They recognise all the benefits which will accrue to the cause of humanity and civilisation from the institution of international arrangements designed to prevent violent conflicts between nations, and so framed as to provide the sanctions necessary to their enforcement, lest an illusory security should serve merely to facilitate fresh acts of aggression.

3. But a discussion of future arrangements for assuring a durable peace presupposes a satisfactory settlement of the present conflict. The Allies cherish a desire as deep as that of the Government of the United States to see an end put as soon as possible to the war for which the Central Empires are responsible, and which inflicts such cruel sufferings upon humanity. But in their judgment it is impossible to obtain at this

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moment such a peace as will not only secure to them the reparation, the restitution, and the guarantees justly due to them by reason of the act of aggression, the guilt of which is fixed upon the Central Powers, while the very principle from which it sprang was undermining the safety of Europe; and at the same time such a peace as will enable the future of the European nations to be established upon a sure foundation. The Allied nations are convinced that they are not fighting for selfish interests, but above all to provide safeguards for the independence of peoples, for law and for humanity.

4. The Allies are fully conscious of the losses and suffering entailed by war on neutrals, as well as on belligerents. They regret them, but cannot consider themselves responsible for them, as they in no way either desired or provoked this war; they are doing all in their power to reduce in every possible way the damage occasioned by it, so far as they can do so under the inexorable pressure of providing for their own defence against the violence and devices of the enemy.

5. They note with satisfaction the declaration made to them that the American communication is not in any way connected in its origin with that of the Central Powers, transmitted to them on December 18th by the Government of the United States. Indeed, they did not doubt the determination of that Government to avoid any appearance of giving even moral support to the responsible authors of the war.

6. The Allied Governments feel it their duty to challenge in the most friendly, but also in the clearest way, the analogy drawn between the two groups of belligerents. This analogy, based on the public declarations of the Central Powers, is in direct conflict with the evidence, both as regards responsibility for the past and guarantees for the future. President Wilson, in alluding to this analogy, did not of course intend to adopt it as his own.

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7. If any fact of history is clearly established to-day, it is the calculated policy of aggression by which Germany and Austria-Hungary sought to ensure their hegemony of Europe and their economic domination over the world. By her declaration of war, by the instant violation of Belgium and Luxemburg, and by her methods of warfare, Germany has proved that she systematically scorns every principle of humanity and all respect due to small States. More and more as the struggle has progressed has the attitude of the Central Powers and their Allies been a constant challenge to humanity and civilisation. Is it necessary to recall the horrors that marked the invasion of Belgium and of Serbia, the atrocious treatment undergone by the invaded countries, the massacres of hundreds of thousands of inoffensive Armenians, the barbarities inflicted upon the peoples of Syria, the raids of Zeppelins upon open towns, the destruction by submarines of passenger liners and merchant vessels, even under neutral flags, the cruel treatment inflicted on prisoners of war, the judicial murders of Miss Cavell and Captain Fryatt, the deportation and enslavement of civil populations, etc? The perpetration of such a catalogue of crimes regardless of the reprobation of mankind will surely explain to President Wilson the protest which the Allies here make.

8. They consider that the Note which they have handed to the United States in reply to the German Note answers the question put by the American Government, and constitutes in their own words a public "avowal of their views as to the terms upon which the war might be concluded." But President Wilson expressed a further wish: he desires the belligerent Powers to state in the full light of day the aims they have set themselves in prosecuting the war. The Allies find no difficulty in meeting this request. Their aims in this war are well known, for they have been repeatedly expressed by the heads of their several Governments.

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These aims can only be formulated in detail, with all the just compensations and indemnities due for the losses suffered, when the moment for negotiation arrives. But the civilised world knows that they include, primarily and of necessity, the restoration of Belgium, of Serbia, and of Montenegro, with the compensations due to them; the evacuation of the invaded territories in France, Russia, and Roumania with fitting reparation; the reorganisation of Europe, guaranteed by a stable settlement, based alike upon the principle of nationalities, on the right which all peoples, whether small or great, have to the enjoyment of full security and free economic development, and also upon territorial agreements and international arrangements so framed as to guarantee land and sea frontiers against unjust attacks; the restitution of provinces or territories formerly torn from the Allies by force or contrary to the wishes of their inhabitants; the liberation of Italians, Slavs, Roumanians, Czechs, and Slovaks from foreign domination; the liberation of the peoples who now lie beneath the murderous tyranny of the Turks and the expulsion from Europe of the Ottoman Empire, which has proved itself so radically alien to Western civilisation.

9. The intentions of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia in regard to Poland have been clearly shown in the proclamation which he has just addressed to his armies.

10. It is hardly necessary to add that, while it is the wish of the Allies to rescue Europe from the brutal encroachments of Prussian militarism, it has never been their intention, as has been alleged, to seek the extermination or the political extinction of the Germanic peoples. The chief aim of the Allies is to assure peace on those principles of liberty, justice, and inviolable fidelity to international obligations, which have never ceased to inspire the action of the United States.

With this high end in view, the Allied Governments

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are each and all determined to put forth all their strength and to endure every sacrifice in order that they may press to a victorious close a conflict on which, they are convinced, depend not only their own safety and prosperity, but the very future of civilisation.

## THE GERMAN NOTE TO NEUTRALS.

The Imperial Government is aware that the Government of the United States of America, the Royal Spanish Government, and the Swiss Government have received the reply of their enemies to the Note of December 12th, in which Germany, in concert with her Allies, proposed forthwith to enter into peace negotiations.

Our adversaries decline this proposition, giving as a reason that it is a proposition without sincerity and without importance. The form in which they clothe their communication excludes an answer to them, but the Imperial Government considers it important to point out to the Governments of Neutral Powers its opinion about the situation.

The Central Powers have no reason to enter again into discussions about the origin of the world's war. History will judge upon whom the immense guilt of the war falls. History's verdict will as little pass over the encircling policy of England, the revenge policy of France, the endeavour of Russia to gain Constantinople, as over the instigations of the Serbian assassination in Serajevo, and the complete mobilisation of Russia which went to war against Germany.

It can be well understood that the Central Powers refuse to enter into discussions about the origin of the war. Were they to do so, it would be necessary for them to give an answer to those questions which

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now for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years have been addressed to them in vain. Why did Germany pledge her support without reservation to the immoderate demands made by Austria from Serbia? Why did Austria refuse the requests made to her that she should prolong the time limit to Serbia in order to give time for an agreement? Why did Germany refuse every offer for submission of the points at issue, whether to The Hague Conference, to arbitration, or to a Conference of the Powers? Why did Germany issue to Russia an ultimatum so worded that it could not be accepted, for it demanded that Russia should disarm completely while Austria continued her war against Serbia? Why did the German Government publish lying statements as to acts of hostility committed by the French against the German Empire?

And what use is it now to speak about the encircling policy of England? Was Germany alone to be allowed to make treaties and alliances with other States, with Austria, with Italy, with Bulgaria, with Roumania and with Turkey, and were France, Russia and England to be debarred from entering into agreements with one another? What does this mean, except that Germany was to have a prerogative position in Europe, that she could make alliances as she would, but that no other States were to be permitted to do so. As to the revenge policy of France—Bismarck, with full knowledge of the consequences, knowing that thereby he would in effect create a permanent estrangement between France and Germany, determined to annex the conquered French provinces, including also Metz, to

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which he never pretended that Germany had any claim. He did so believing that Germany, by her superior strength, would be able to disregard the feeling of hostility in France, which was the inevitable and well-known result of his own action. It is not for Germany to complain that France has never acquiesced in the forcible mutilation of her own territory. As to the instigation of the Serbian assassination at Serajevo, it is only necessary to recall that but for the opposition of Austria-Hungary this matter would have been the subject of an international inquest. Germany and Austria-Hungary refused the offer and prefer, instead of inquiry, to be able to repeat charges which they have never proved. And what are we to say to this complaint that Russia mobilised and went to war with Germany? Russia did not go to war with Germany. She mobilised in self-defence, and this (how characteristically !) was regarded as an offence and made a pretext of war by Germany.

Germany and her Allies, who had to take up arms for the defence of their liberty and their existence, consider this, their aim of war, as obtained.

How was the liberty and existence of Germany or her Allies menaced? Turkey and Bulgaria at least entered the war on their own initiative; had they remained neutral, there were offered to Turkey full security and the guarantee of her possessions, to Bulgaria there was even opened the prospect of an increase of territory. To them, had they remained at peace, there was no menace or danger. And what danger was there to the existence and

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liberty of Germany? It was open to her, in co-operating with Great Britain, to take the leading part in the maintenance of European peace and the settlement of the dispute between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Was this a menace to her liberty and her existence? Austria-Hungary was the only one of the Central Powers which had even the shadow of a reason for war, and to her was offered the full support of the other States of Europe in getting that reparation to which it might be shown that she had a just claim.

On the other hand, the hostile Powers always went farther away from the realisation of their plans, which, according to declarations made by responsible statesmen, were, among others, directed towards the conquest of Alsace-Lorraine and several Prussian provinces, the humiliation and diminution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the partition of Turkey, the mutilation of Bulgaria.

In the place of such war aims a demand for sanction, reparation, and guarantees in the mouth of our adversaries makes a surprising effect.

The statement issued by the Allied Powers in their answer to President Wilson gives in the only authentic form the objects with which the war is now being conducted. They do not include the severance from Germany of any territory except such territory as is inhabited by a population not of German nationality and has been seized by violence, careless of the protests of the inhabitants. If the diminution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the partition of Turkey are now part of the programme of the Allies, it is because the Governments

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of these States have themselves forced to the front questions which have been too long allowed to wait for a solution. It is in truth not the prestige and the extent of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy with which the Allies are concerned, but the welfare and prosperity of the inhabitants of the districts ruled from Vienna and Budapest. No changes are proposed which would not meet the expressed wishes of the inhabitants of this State. In modern Europe there is no longer place for nations to occupy a position such as that too long held by the Czechs, the Italians, the Roumanians, the Slavs. And the time has come when they should take their place with their own institutions among the free and independent nations of Europe.

Our adversaries call the proposal of the four Allied Powers a war manœuvre. Germany and her Allies must protest in a most energetic fashion that their motives, which are explained frankly, are being adulterated in this way. They were persuaded that a peace which is just and acceptable to all belligerents was possible, that it could be brought about by an immediate spoken exchange of views, and that, therefore, the responsibility of further bloodshed could not be taken. Their readiness, affirmed without reservation, to make known their peace conditions at the entrance into negotiations refutes every doubt as to their sincerity.

If it is indeed the case that the motives of Germany and her Allies have been mis-interpreted, and if they are willing to propose terms of peace acceptable to all belligerents, it is open to them to prove this by doing that which they have hitherto hesitated to do, and to follow the example of the Allies by

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publishing to the world the proposals that they would be willing to make.

Our adversaries, who had it in their hands to examine the proposition as to its contents, neither attempted such an examination nor made any counter-proposals. Instead, they declare that peace is impossible as long as the re-establishment of the violated rights and liberties, recognition of the principle of nationalities, and the free existence of small States are not guaranteed. The sincerity which our adversaries deny to the proposals of the four Allied Powers will not be conceded by the world to these demands if the world holds before its eyes the fate of the Irish people, the destruction of the liberty and independence of the Boer Republics, the subjugation of Northern Africa by England, France, and Italy, the suppression of Russian alien nations, and also the violation of Greece, which is without precedent in history.

The Allies have no reason to shun the comparison which the German Government suggests between the fate of those peoples who are included in their own dominions and that of the Poles and French who have been incorporated in the German Empire, and the numerous nationalities comprised in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As to Ireland, the world can judge of the sincerity of the attempts that have been made and are being made to give to the Irish people full control over Irish affairs, and the British Government are willing to abide by the views and action of the representatives of the Irish people chosen by free election and speaking with complete equality in the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Are the German and the Austrian Governments willing to give the same freedom of utterance to their subjects? If so, why has the Austrian Government

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not ventured during the course of the war to summon the Austrian Parliament? And those who speak of the destruction of the liberty and independence of the Boer Republics will find their answer in the free united South Africa and in the willing participation in this war undertaken by the Dutch and English inhabitants.

It is unnecessary to point out that the establishment of European administration in North Africa by which, for the first time, the first elements for the security of life and property were introduced into that country, has nothing whatever to do with the establishment of the principle of nationality among civilised European races. British administration in Egypt is now giving to the oppressed Fellahs that security and prosperity on which perhaps in the future the national consciousness may be built up.

The German Government is indignant at the oppression of Greece. Indignation comes ill from those who are responsible for the present condition of Belgium. Of course, the real truth about Greece is that the Allies have shown an extraordinary and perhaps culpable long suffering. Greece had pledged herself by treaty to the support of Serbia in a war against Bulgaria; this treaty was violated; the Allies of Serbia had full and complete right to demand from her the fulfilment of her treaty obligations, *i.e.*, active support in war; they have contented themselves with infinitely less than this, and when Germany speaks of the oppression of Greece, the answer will be given by the desecrated churches, the ruined towns, the women and children massacred

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in Belgium, and this, not because Belgium had broken faith, but because she kept it.

Also against the pretended violations of the laws of nations by the four Allies, those Powers are not entitled to complain which from the beginning of the war trampled on justice and tore to pieces the tradition upon which it is based. Already during the first weeks of the war England repudiated the London Declaration, the contents of which had been recognised by her own delegates as valid law of nations, and in the further course of the war she violated in the most severe fashion also the Paris Declaration, so that by her arbitrary measures for her welfare on sea a condition of lawlessness was created.

The war of starvation against Germany and the pressure exercised against neutrals in England's interests are not less scandalously in conflict with the rules of the laws of nations than with the commands of humanity.

This statement is a flagrant misrepresentation of the facts. The contents of the London Declaration had never been recognised by the British Government as valid law of nations; so far is this from being the case that when the Declaration came up for discussion in the two Houses of Parliament preliminary to ratification, the approval of the legislature was refused and ratification never took place. Great Britain, therefore, was acting completely within her rights when at the beginning of the war she declared that she was not bound by the terms of this Declaration, though at the same time she did in fact express her desire so far as was possible to follow it in practice.

“The war of starvation against Germany” means the stoppage of all trade from Germany to the outer

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world. This is a form of warfare which has been repeatedly adopted in the past by all nations; it is that which the German States themselves adopted towards Paris in the War of 1870-71; it is that which was adopted by the Government of the United States in the Civil War of 1862. It is no more in accordance with the interests of England than with the general interests of the Allies, and, in fact, the prevention of all foreign trade is the joint action of all the Allies. On the land frontier it is maintained by their united armies, on the sea frontier by their united fleets.

So far from neglecting the Law of Nations, the British Government in its attempt scrupulously to observe the established rules and precedents only applied her sea-power gradually, and for many months sacrificed her own interests to her consideration for those of other nations. She was only driven to use her power to the fullest extent after Germany had, by her unparalleled violations of all rules of warfare and humanity, shown her contempt for the rights of neutrals. If the whole matter is carefully examined in detail, it will be seen that though it has in fact been impossible, owing to the changes in the nature of sea warfare, to abide in every case by the strict letter of the rules applicable in former wars, Great Britain and her Allies have used the utmost efforts to insure that their conduct should be in accordance with the principles on which these rules have been made, and they believe that when the time comes for an impartial survey of all that has happened, the judgment will be that they have acted with the greatest moderation and the greatest pos-

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sible consideration for the rights and interests of other Powers.

Likewise, contrary to the law of nations, and incompatible with the principle of civilisation, is the use of coloured troops in Europe and the extension of the war into Africa, which was done by a breach of existing treaties, and which undermines the prestige of the white race on that Continent. The barbarous treatment of prisoners, especially in Africa and Russia, the deportation of the civilian population from Eastern Prussia and Alsace-Lorraine, Galicia, and Bukovina are further proof of how our adversaries respect justice and civilisation.

The employment of coloured troops in Europe is not inconsistent with international law. The employment of trained, disciplined and civilised soldiers, such as those of our Indian Army, is not inconsistent with humanity. If Germany dislikes this, it is only because she has herself no coloured troops to employ. She has not refrained from sending her officers and men to fight as allies of the Kurds fresh from the blood of the slaughtered Armenians.

Germany complains of the treatment of prisoners. Let anyone who might be misled by this compare the authentic records of the treatment of German prisoners in the allied countries with the equally authentic record of what took place at the Camp at Gardelegen. The accusations made regarding the treatment of German prisoners in East Africa have been repeatedly and fully refuted.

At the end of their Note of December 30th our adversaries point out the special situation of Belgium. The Imperial Government is unable to acknowledge that the Belgian Government has always observed the duties

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which were enjoined upon it by its neutrality. Already before the war Belgium, under England's influence, sought support in military fashion from England and France, and thus violated herself the spirit of the treaties which were to guarantee her independence and neutrality. Twice the Imperial Government declared to the Belgian Government that it did not come as an enemy to Belgium, and asked it to spare the country the terrors of war. She in this case offered to guarantee the integrity and independence of the kingdom in its full extension and compensate all damages which might be caused by the passage of German troops. It is known that the Royal British Government in 1887 was resolved not to oppose the use of the right-of-way through Belgium under those conditions. The Belgian Government declined the repeated offers of the Imperial Government. Upon it and those Powers which instigated it to this attitude falls the responsibility for the fate which befell Belgium. The accusations about German warfare in Belgium and about the measures taken there in the interest of military safety have been repeatedly refuted by the Imperial Government as untrue. It again offers an energetic protest against these calumniations. Germany and her Allies made an honest attempt to terminate the war and open a road for an understanding among the belligerents.

This is sufficiently answered by the Note of the Belgian Government, which is printed below. It is untrue that the Belgian Government had neglected the duties enjoined upon it by its neutrality or sought support in violation of the spirit of the treaties of England and France. The uttermost that took place before the war was a recognition that, if and when Belgian territory was invaded by German troops, it would be the right and the duty of Great Britain and France to come to the protection of a

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kingdom whose existence and neutrality they had guaranteed.

The Imperial Government offered to spare the country the terrors of war. What does this mean? If the German Army advanced through Belgium against France it was open to the French Armies also to enter on Belgian soil in order to meet the threatened invasion. Was this sparing Belgium the terrors of war? Was it not rather to restore that old and bad system by which the soil of the Low Countries should become the cockpit of Europe? And what benefit to Belgium would be the guarantee of her integrity and independence if she at once tacitly acquiesced in this violation of her sovereignty? She would have been condemned for all time to the position of a State subject to the German Empire.

The statement as to what happened in 1887 is an extraordinary fabrication. All that happened then was that two newspapers raised the question whether it would be the duty of Great Britain to oppose the use of the right of way through Belgium; not a word was said by the British Government on this matter; the suggestions made that Great Britain was not bound to prevent the passage of German troops through Belgium was not favourably received, and after desultory discussion for a few weeks the matter was dropped. No formal discussion of any kind took place, no word was said on the matter by the Government, and it can be confidently asserted that, if there had been a serious consideration, the British Government and the British nation would have found that they were, in fact, bound to act as

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they did in 1870 and in 1914, and would have so acted.

The Imperial Government declares that it merely depended upon the decision of its adversaries whether the road towards peace should be entered upon or not. The hostile Governments declined to accept this road. Upon them falls the full responsibility for the continuation of the bloodshed. The four Allied Powers, however, will continue the struggle in quiet confidence and with the firm trust in their good right until a peace is gained which guarantees to their nations honour, existence, and liberty of development, which to all nations of the European Continent will give the blessing of co-operating together in mutual respect and under equal rights for the solution of the great problems of life.

The truth about the German attempt to terminate the war is this : they have obtained considerable military successes, but they are quickly approaching the end of their resources. If peace could be concluded now, as they propose, on the basis of their successes, the inevitable result would be to leave them supreme in Europe ; they would dominate the whole of the centre of the Continent ; from Antwerp to Trieste and Galatz—whatever the actual terms of peace might be—Europe would be subjugated by the German armies, and they would use their success, as has been proposed by their most distinguished writers and statesmen, to bind all Central Europe together into a military State. This would be the end of the freedom of Europe ; if the other European States worked together at the solution of the great problems of civilisation, it would mean that they worked under German guidance and German control. But

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the other States of Europe do not intend to submit to German *Kultur*. They propose to continue their work in the common cause of civilisation, but as free and independent units. For this reason the Allies would not be justified in stopping the war at that period in it which, for military reasons, was most convenient to the Germanic Powers, and not using to the full those resources which they believe are sufficient to enable them to achieve the great end of all their efforts, a free Europe, in which France, Belgium, Holland, Poland, Bohemia, the Southern Slavs and Italy, will each take their part, not as subject Allies of a military and monarchical Germany, but as independent States, free members of the great confederation of Europe which will arise after the war.

## THE BELGIAN REPLY.

The Royal Government, which has associated itself with the Reply handed by the French Prime Minister to the Ambassador of the United States, desires particularly to express its sense of the sentiments of humanity that have prompted the President of the United States in addressing his Note to the belligerent Powers, and it highly appreciates the friendship towards Belgium which he interprets with such good will.

As much as Mr. Woodrow Wilson, the Royal Government would wish to see this war come to an end as soon as possible.

But the President seems to think that the statesmen in the two hostile camps are pursuing the same war aims. The example of Belgium unhappily demonstrates that this is not the case. Unlike the Central Powers, Belgium has never aimed at conquest. The barbarous manner in which the German Government has treated and still treats the Belgian nation does not admit of any supposition that Germany will make it her care to guarantee for the future the rights of weak peoples which she has not ceased to trample under foot ever since the war that she let loose began to ravage Europe.

On the other hand, the Royal Government notes with pleasure and with confidence the assurance that the United States impatiently await the moment to co-operate in the measures which will be taken, after peace, to protect and guarantee small nations against violence and oppression.

Until Germany delivered her ultimatum, Belgium's

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sole aspiration was to live on good terms with all her neighbours; towards each of them she discharged with scrupulous loyalty the obligations imposed on her by her neutrality. How was she rewarded by Germany for the confidence she showed? Overnight, without plausible warrant, her neutrality was violated, her territory was invaded, and the Imperial Chancellor, in announcing to the Reichstag this violation of right and of treaty, was compelled to admit the iniquity of such an act and to promise that reparation would be made. But the Germans, after occupying Belgian territory, showed themselves no more observant of the rules of international law or of the provisions of The Hague Conventions. They exhausted the resources of the country by exactions as heavy as they were arbitrary; they deliberately ruined its industries, destroyed whole towns, and put to death or imprisoned a considerable number of inhabitants. Even now, while they loudly proclaim their desire to put an end to the horrors of the war, they aggravate the rigours of the occupation by carrying Belgian workmen into slavery by thousands.

If there is a country that is entitled to say that it took up arms in order to defend its existence, that country assuredly is Belgium. Compelled by force to fight or to submit to dishonour, she passionately desires that an end may be set to the unheard-of sufferings of her population. But she could accept only a peace that assures to her, together with equitable reparation, securities and guarantees for the future.

The American people have, since the beginning of the war, manifested towards the oppressed Belgian people their most ardent sympathy. An American committee, the "Commission for Relief in Belgium," in intimate co-operation with the King's Government and with the National Committee, is displaying tireless devotion and marvellous activity in supplying the needs of Belgium. The Royal Government is happy to seize this oppor-

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tunity of expressing its profound gratitude to the "Commission for Relief" and to the generous Americans who are so eagerly bent on relieving the miseries of the Belgian population. Nowhere, moreover, have the raiding and deportation of Belgian civilians provoked a more spontaneous outburst of protest and of indignant reprobation than in the United States.

These facts, which are all to the honour of the American people, inspire the Royal Government with the legitimate hope that, at the final settlement of this long war, the voice of the Entente Powers will find in the United States a unanimous echo to claim for Belgium, the innocent victim of German ambition and of German greed, the rank and position that are marked out for her among the civilised nations, by virtue of her blameless past, by the valour of her soldiers, by her fidelity to honour, and by her people's remarkable aptitude for work.

*Paris, Jan. 10, 1917.*